

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

SUBJECT: DRAINAGE FACILITIES  
POLICY NO.: 800-04  
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 25, 1978

**BACKGROUND:**

**1. Introduction:**

- a. Adequate drainage facilities are required to remove storm water runoff in an efficient, economic, environmentally and aesthetically acceptable manner for the protection of property and life. Various types of drainage facilities are required dependent upon the situation encountered.
- b. A flood plain management program is applied to flood plain areas designated on flood hazard boundary maps (areas subject to inundation by the 100-year frequency flood) as furnished by the National Flood Insurance Administration. The program consists of applying floodway (FW) and flood plain fringe (FPF) zoning to flood plains within the City of San Diego and regulating ongoing development in accordance with this zoning and Council Policy 600-14. The program is based upon the development of long range master hydraulic plans for each stream and/or, when appropriate, flood-proofing to provide flood protection for buildings subject to flooding within flood hazard areas consistent with the General Plan and Community Plans, and the development of flood control projects.
- c. Financing construction and reconstruction of the City's storm water drainage involves varying benefits and responsibilities and may, therefore, involve a division of costs between the property owners, the City and possibly federal and/or State agencies. In some cases, however, costs may be borne by property owners entirely, by City entirely, by City and other agencies entirely or by other agencies entirely. Work may be done by a City contract, another agency contract, an Assessment District, private contract accomplished under either a public improvement permit or subdivision agreement, or any combination thereof.

**2. Storm Water Drainage Definitions:**

- a. Drainage (Runoff)  
Area - A geographical area comprising the limits of contributory surface runoff to a storm drain system.
- b. Benefitted Area - A geographical area, not necessarily the same as runoff area, which benefits directly from a drainage project.
- c. Storm Drain - A system of closed drainage conduits connected by cleanouts, inlets, catch basins, and other appurtenances.
- d. Culvert - A drainage conduit extending only under a roadway and open at both ends.
- e. Drainage Ditch - An open graded or lined ditch which is 8 feet or less in width across the bottom.
- f. Drainage Channel - An open graded or lined channel which is wider than 8 feet across the bottom.

- g. Natural Ditch or Channel - A ditch or channel created by natural storm runoffs and erosion.
- h. Drainage Swale - A constructed wide and shallow depression which conveys drainage runoff.
- i. Public Drainage Facilities - Drainage facilities, constructed to City standards, which convey drainage through public street rights-of-way and public drainage easements, excepting private facilities installed by encroachment permit.
- j. Seepage Lines - Facilities constructed to convey water from areas affected by groundwater seepage.
- k. Brow Ditch, Terrace Ditch, Back Lot Line Ditch and Side Lot Line Ditch - A ditch constructed to intercept and convey minor surface drainage runoff. These are usually private drainage facilities.
- l. Private Drainage Facilities - Drainage facilities constructed on private property and maintained by the property owners. They normally convey surface runoff on private property but may, in some instances, be designed to intercept and convey seepage water. Occasionally such facilities may be installed in public rights-of-way under encroachment permit.

**PURPOSE:**

1. To establish guidelines for the construction and maintenance of storm water drainage facilities.
2. To identify and assign general financial responsibilities for the construction of various types of drainage facilities.

**POLICY:****1. General**

The responsibility for the construction of storm water drainage facilities is based upon the following criteria:

- a. It is the basic responsibility of any owner or holder of land to accept and provide a suitable conveyance and outlet for the natural upstream flow of storm water runoff passing through or originating from such land.
- b. Diversion of the natural flow of storm water runoff from one runoff area to another shall not be permitted without specific approval of the City.
- c. The City will generally accept responsibility for maintenance of public drainage facilities which are designed and constructed to City standards and located within a public street or drainage easement dedicated to the City.

- d. The City will accept drainage easements only when drainage facilities are installed to the standards established by the City.
- e. The construction and maintenance of drainage facilities for limited drainage areas, where runoff is clearly from private property and the drainage facilities are of local benefit, is the responsibility of the private property owners affected.

## 2. Undeveloped and Unsubdivided Areas of the City

- a. When such areas are proposed to be subdivided by the owner/developer, the necessary public drainage facilities to be constructed by the subdivision will be subject to determination, review and approval by the City. When approved, the costs of construction will be borne by the owner/developer. Continuing maintenance of these public drainage facilities will become the responsibility of the City, subject to completion and City acceptance of all subdivision public improvements required of the developer and the granting of appropriate easements to the City.
- b. Necessary private drainage facilities in the subdivision will also be subject to determination, review and approval by the City and the costs of construction will be borne by the developer. Continuing maintenance of such facilities becomes the sole responsibility of subsequent property owners on which the facility is located and their private nature should be appropriately noted on all subdivision plans and documents.

## 3. Developed Areas

- a. Public drainage facilities required to replace or augment existing inadequate facilities in a completely developed area will be constructed by the City. The City will usually finance all costs, subject to available funding, priorities and scheduling. In such areas, the City will normally accept responsibility for confining storm water runoff within the limits of the street or installed drainage facilities and will take steps to avoid street drainage overflow. When new facilities will alleviate street flooding and consequent damage to private property due to previously installed inadequate drainage facilities, property in the area is deemed to have previously financed existing improvements and, therefore, should not be reassessed.
- b. Private drainage facilities associated with land development and building activity are subject to review and approval by the City and the cost of construction will be borne by the property owner or permittee. Continuing maintenance of such facilities becomes the sole responsibility of the property owner on whose land the facilities are located.

## 4. Partially Developed Areas

- a. Public drainage facilities required in partially developed areas involving some undeveloped properties are subject to City approval, under the following alternates:

### (1) Assessment District with City Participation

These projects may be initiated in accordance with Council Policy 800-03. The assessment project's benefiting area would normally be limited to those properties in close proximity to the facility which would experience an elimination of flood hazard or derive other tangible benefits from the construction of the facility. Because the project usually includes work which is of intangible general benefit to an extensive area, the City and/or other governmental

agencies will ordinarily participate. City participation will usually not exceed 50% of the total costs, although the exact amount may vary depending on the relative benefit and responsibilities. Further, drainage projects included in the City's Capital Improvements Program for potential City financing with relatively low priorities may be accelerated if the affected property owners agree via assessment petition to assume a share of the cost in consideration of such acceleration.

(2) Assessment Projects without City Participation

These are projects which benefit only a limited area which are constructed under Assessment District proceedings in accordance with Council Policy 800-03. The assessment district will pay all costs, and the district includes only that property which will receive direct tangible benefit.

- b. Private drainage facilities that are associated with subdivision activity are subject to the same criteria as outlined for undeveloped areas in paragraph 2.b. Those not involved with subdivision activity are subject to the same criteria as outlined for developed areas in paragraph 3.b.

5. Cooperative Drainage Projects

A cooperative drainage project is a small facility in which the City shares the total cost of the installation with a property owner. The purpose is to assist in upgrading older areas which were subdivided without the construction of adequate drainage facilities, thereby reducing maintenance costs to the City, public hazards and/or property damage. The City's share will normally be limited to 50% of the total cost of the project.

- a. Projects are eligible for cooperative financing if they meet any of the following conditions:
  - (1) Will accept drainage off improved City streets or other public rights of way.
  - (2) Will accept drainage from developed or partially developed areas and the property on which the drain is to be constructed is already subdivided.
  - (3) Will benefit the City by eliminating a maintenance problem, a public hazard and/or property damage.
  - (4) Will solve groundwater seepage problems that cannot be corrected by surface runoff facilities. City will pay for the portion of a cooperative seepage project which is located within the public right of way. The responsibility for design, financing and construction of the portion of such systems located on private property shall be borne by the property owner.
- b. Projects do not qualify for cooperative financing under the following conditions:
  - (1) The facility is intended to provide a culvert under an unimproved street. (These should be installed with the street improvement.)
  - (2) Drainage work contemplated is incompatible with the overall drainage plan for the area.
  - (3) Project is only of benefit to the private property owner or is of such scope that it should be financed under one of the alternatives previously outlined.

6. Funding

- a. With the exception of cooperative drainage projects and assessment districts projects, all projects with significant or total funding by the City shall be specifically identified and scheduled in the Capital Improvements Program of the City.
- b. City funding for drainage projects shall be from sources determined by the City Council and may include but not be limited to the Capital Outlay Fund, Bond Funds, Gas Tax, Grants, etc., as permitted by law.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-184507 08/05/1965  
Amended by Resolution R-194065 06/27/1968  
Amended by Resolution R-212240 12/19/1974  
Amended by Resolution R-221474 07/25/1978